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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2703
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3166
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 6247
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2295
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006654

SIPDIS

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PACOM FOR FPA HUSO
NSC FOR MORROW

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-COUP SUICIDE FOLLOWED BY SMALL PROTEST IN
SANAM LUANG

11. (SBU) Summary: On October 31, a taxi driver who made headlines earlier by ramming his taxi into a tank, committed suicide by hanging himself. In a note left near his body, Nuamthong Phaiwan claimed that he took his life as a form of protest against coup. On the evening of November 1, a about 200 protesters gathered peacefully in Sanam Luang to voice opposition to the coup. The demonstration was planned in advance of Nuamthong's suicide, but organizers coordinated with Nuamthong's family to hold a memorial at Bangkok's Democracy Monument. Police reportedly prevented the family from taking the body to Democracy Monument, and the memorial was cancelled. Additionally, there are unconfirmed reports that the military was ordered to prevent some protesters from attending the demonstration at Sanam Luang. End Summary.

Protest Suicide

12. (U) On the evening of October 31, Nuamthong Phaiwan, a taxi driver who made headlines on September 30 by ramming his taxi into a tank in Bangkok, committed suicide by hanging himself from a footbridge in front of the Thai Rath newspaper's headquarters. The body was found shortly after midnight on November 1. Two letters and several newspaper clippings were found near the body. The letters state that Nuamthong chose to take his life as a form of protest against the September 19 military coup. One letter reportedly says that he specifically chose to kill himself to protest a statement made by junta spokesperson Col. Akkana Thiparot implying that no one would physically harm themselves to protest the coup. (Note: Akkana has apologized for his comments and offered condolences to Nuamthong's family. End note.)

Sanam Luang - Again

13. (U) On the evening of November 1, a group calling itself "White Dove 2006" staged a demonstration in Bangkok's Sanam Luang. (Note: Sanam Luang is the historically significant site of anti-government demonstrations that ushered out unpopular government in the 1970s, 1990s, and site of the massive anti-Thaksin protests earlier this year. End note.)

The organizers are known Thaksin supporters Chanapat Na Nakhon and Waranchai Chokchana. Poloff observed the demonstration and estimates that it drew approximately 200 protesters, most of whom appeared to be taxi drivers. Protest organizers issued a statement demanding that the interim government lift martial law, revoke the interim constitution, reinstate the 1997 constitution, and hold national elections in 60 days.

14. (SBU) The demonstration was peaceful. There were 10-15 uniformed police officers stationed on the edge of the small crowd, but they did not interfere with the protest. Some protesters approached Poloff to complain about the presence of plain-clothed security officers mingling in the crowd. Protesters also complained to Poloff that security officials were preventing people from traveling to Sanam Luang from several parts of Bangkok. (Comment: Poloff drove his car across Bangkok to Sanam Luang and saw no evidence of any police or military effort to prevent people from reaching the demonstration. Some newspaper accounts on November 2 report that Defense Minister Boonrawd Sontas ordered the military to block people from traveling to the demonstration. We have been unable to confirm these reports. End Comment.)

15. (U) Though the demonstration was planned in advance of Nuamthong's suicide, protest organizers contacted the family and offered to stage a memorial service at Democracy Monument as a part of their demonstration. Nuamthong's wife reportedly agreed and was in the process of transporting the body to Democracy Monument from a suburb of Bangkok when she was stopped by police. The police reportedly persuaded the widow to cancel her plans and return Nuamthong's body to the temple.

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